

ARTICLE APPENDED  
ON PAGE 41NEW YORK TIMES  
14 May 1986

# U.S. Aides Harshly Assail Mexico On Drugs, Immigration and Graft

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Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, May 13 — Federal officials, testifying before a Senate subcommittee today, offered what they characterized as the sharpest public criticism of Mexico that has come out of the United States Government in many years.

The officials, testifying before the Foreign Relations Committee's Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere Affairs, criticized the Mexican Government's handling of illegal immigration, drug trafficking, government corruption and the nation's troubled economy.

The head of the United States Customs Service, William von Raab, accused the governor of one Mexican state of growing marijuana and opium poppies on his own farms, which, Mr. von Raab said, were being guarded by the Mexican Army.

Senator Frank H. Murkowski, Republican of Alaska, asked the witnesses whether certain relatives of the Mexican President, Miguel de la Madrid, were drug traffickers. The question,

Senate aides said, came out of intelligence information given during a closed subcommittee hearing on Mexico yesterday. Mr. von Raab answered, "We have no comment on that in a public hearing."

Leonardo Ffrench Iduarte, the Mexican Embassy press and public affairs officer, called the suggestion that Mr. de la Madrid's relatives were involved in drug dealing "an irresponsible and preposterous allegation."

Even the State Department, normally reluctant to publicly rebuke a friendly nation, joined in the criticism. Elliott Abrams, Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, lauded the subcommittee and its chairman, Senator Jesse Helms, Republican of North Carolina, for holding "this novel hearing."

In Mexico City, President de la Madrid's information office said there were no plans to respond directly to the

statements in Washington, The Associated Press reported. But it said Mexico's top legal official, Attorney General Sergio García Ramírez, reacted indignantly to reports from United States officials that corruption at all levels of Mexico's law-enforcement system was helping drug traffickers prosper.

## 'It May Get to Be Too Late'

Mr. Abrams said drug-related government corruption was growing so pervasive that "it may get to be too late." He said: "In a number of years, the traffickers' influence on Government may be so strong that it is hard or impossible to root it out."

"This is a very serious business," he added, because the Mexican Government "needs to know how dangerous it is for U.S.-Mexican relations if they don't get a hold of the situation."

Roger P. Brandemuehl, head of the United States Border Patrol, described what he called "a very alarming" increase in illegal immigration. His agency estimates that 1.8 million illegal aliens from Mexico will enter the United States this year, a 50 percent increase from last year.

As the testimony grew so harsh that Mexican journalists and others attending the hearing grimaced and shook their heads, Mr. Abrams said "the purpose here is not to call names and throw mud." But he added, "public pressure and publicity" was one of the best methods available to get Mexico's

attention, even though he said the hearing would certainly make the Mexican Government angry.

Mr. Ffrench, the Mexican Embassy officer, said the hearing was "quite partial and biased" and "only dealt with negative facts, not with 'the efforts and accomplishments of the Mexican Government.'" Holding such hearings may be common practice in this country, he said, but "it certainly is meddling in Mexican internal affairs."

## 'Laundering' of Funds

As evidence of the drug smuggling problem along the border, Mr. von Raab said Mexican traffickers were "laundering" so much money through American banks that one bank in the tiny Texas border town of Presidio, southeast of El Paso, had taken so many deposits recently that it is now the 6th largest bank in the state. Presidio has a population of about 7,100, and 3,000 of those people live "at or below the poverty line," Mr. von Raab said.

David L. Westrate, head of the Drug Enforcement Administration's operations division, said the efficiency of the Mexican program to spray herbicides on marijuana and opium poppy fields had improved in recent weeks. But he said Government corruption made it unlikely that "progress can be made in the short term" to improve Mexican investigations of drug trafficking.